



STATE OF ARIZONA

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Statement to the Subcommittee on Border, Maritime
and Global Counterterrorism
Hearing on *"Enhancing DHS' Efforts to Disrupt
Alien Smuggling Across Our Borders"*
Thursday, July 22, 2010, 10:00 a.m.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit this statement on human smuggling to the House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee's Subcommittee on Border, Maritime and Global Counterterrorism. This statement reveals why our nation's porous southern border and illegal immigration are of such concern to me and should be a concern to every American.

Arizona is a wonderful place to live, work and visit with its warm welcoming people, year-round sunshine, business ready environment, rich history, and culture. As governor, I am deeply committed to ensuring Arizona maintains all of the qualities that make it such a special place. Regrettably, the lack of a secure international border between Arizona and Mexico and the accompanying issues of human smuggling, border violence and illegal immigration are serious problems that, if allowed to continue unabated, will hurt Arizona's quality of life. The issues are not new and the federal government has neglected to solve them for over a decade or longer. Continued inaction at the federal level over the years has exacerbated the problems. I believe the time has come for the federal government to secure our southern border with Mexico and ensure the preservation of not only Arizona's quality of life but also our nation's sovereignty and security.

The border region has become increasingly lawless and concerns continue to grow about violence spilling over into our border communities and then farther north into major metropolitan areas. Absent a significant improvement in border security and a firm commitment to enforce U.S. immigration laws, citizens throughout the southwest -- not just Arizona -- have a legitimate right to be concerned about lawlessness and violence. Moreover, the federal government's policy of securing the border in the El Paso and San Diego areas has turned Arizona into the superhighway of human smuggling activity, forcing illegal smugglers and illegal aliens into the remote and dangerous Arizona desert on their way to drop houses in Arizona's metropolitan areas.

Human smugglers are criminal operatives that prey on illegal aliens and coordinate their passage into our country. The illegal immigrants are smuggled into the country, typically on foot, through the Arizona desert in very remote, rugged and dangerous terrain. Upon reaching a lay-up area, the smugglers will transition the illegal aliens into a vehicle for transport to a drop house. It is not unusual for smugglers to cram fifteen or more illegal aliens into a truck or van, or, in some cases, the smugglers will place dozens of illegal

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aliens into rental moving vans for transport. The smugglers temporarily stash their human cargo in overcrowded drop houses until transportation to and employment in their final destination are arranged.

The consequences of human smuggling are widespread and impact every single taxpayer. Naturally, human smuggling leads to illegal immigration, but it also leads to illegal alien deaths, crime and violence, an increased financial burden on taxpayers, environmental damage and degradation, and poses a national security threat to the United States as the southern border is an open invitation to terrorists.

The federal government's segmented border enforcement policy is leading to illegal alien deaths in the Arizona desert. A recent news report noted that illegal immigrant deaths were soaring so high this July that the Pima County Medical Examiner's Office is using a refrigerated truck to store some of the bodies. The Pima County Medical Examiner's Office has confirmed the recovery of 140 illegal immigrant bodies since the beginning of this calendar year and 46 illegal immigrant deaths in July alone. Pima County authorities have been tracking border-crossing deaths for over a decade and are concerned that the rate of illegal immigrant deaths this month could top the single-month record of 68 from July 2005. The deaths of these illegal immigrants are the direct result of the federal government's failure to secure the international border with Mexico and it is unfathomable that federal officials allow these deaths to occur year after year.

Illegal aliens who successfully cross the border are frequently victims of their own smugglers. Law enforcement in Arizona is constantly busting illegal alien drop houses, where illegal immigrants are often exploited, required to participate in criminal activities or otherwise abused. It is not uncommon for smugglers to hold illegal aliens hostage until an additional smuggling fee is paid in full. Occasionally, human smugglers will kidnap illegal aliens from other competing smuggling rings. The human smuggling trade has earned the City of Phoenix the distinction of being the kidnapping capital of the United States, with a world ranking only second behind Mexico City.

The existing federal government policy is also bringing crime and violence to Arizona's border with Mexico and to our metropolitan areas. The weekly community informational published by the Tucson Sector of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection provides a snapshot of the arrests made every week in the Tucson sector. Recent reports have noted the arrests of illegal aliens who are admitted members of notorious street gangs such as Mara Salvatrucha (commonly referred to as MS-13), the Sureños and several others. The reports also note the arrests of illegal aliens with previous criminal convictions for numerous crimes against children including child molestation, unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor three years of age or younger, and lewd and lascivious acts with a child under 14 years of age, and still other illegal aliens with convictions for rape, manslaughter, drug trafficking -- and the list goes on. Fortunately, the brave men and women of the Border Patrol apprehended these felons before they could victimize more American citizens. However, news accounts report the Border Patrol estimates they only

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apprehend 1 in 4 border crossers. For every illegal alien with a criminal history arrested, three are not arrested and those criminal aliens find their way into our neighborhoods in Arizona and to other communities throughout the United States. Without a secure border, American citizens will continue to needlessly suffer at the hands of the criminal element of the illegal alien population.

Moreover, recently the federal Bureau of Land Management posted new signs in interior counties of Arizona warning residents not to access federal lands due to criminal activity associated with the border. These warnings signal to some that we have handed over portions of sovereign U.S. territory to human smugglers and drug traffickers. This is an outrage. Instead of warning Americans to stay out of parts of our own country, we ought to be warning all international lawbreakers that they will be detained and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. We should also establish measures that stop illegal border crossings and put an end to crimes perpetrated on Americans by illegal aliens.

The financial costs of human smuggling are burdensome on taxpayers -- whether it be the costs of incarceration, education or health care for illegal aliens. These unnecessary expenses only exacerbate the federal budget deficit and state budget problems.

According to a United States General Accountability Office study conducted in 2005, the most recent report available, it cost the U.S. Bureau of Prisons \$4.2 billion to incarcerate criminal aliens for calendar years 2001 to 2004. The Arizona Department of Corrections incarcerates nearly 6,000 criminal aliens, nearly 15 percent of the inmate population. The incarceration of criminal aliens in the state prison system costs Arizona taxpayers approximately \$150 million annually. Taxpayers are spending an enormous amount of money every year incarcerating criminal aliens who would not be in this country if the federal government would secure the border and enforce its immigration laws. U.S. taxpayers are also footing the bill on other massive expenses relating to health care for illegal immigrants and illegal immigrants in public schools.

The federal government's segmented border enforcement is also causing environmental destruction of the pristine Sonoran Desert. Securing the border in El Paso and San Diego has routed human smugglers through environmentally sensitive areas of southern Arizona. Human smuggling in these areas has led to the desert being littered with trash and human waste. Some areas in southern Arizona resemble landfills. Human smugglers have cut illegal roads and trails through the desert and abandoned countless vehicles. The environmental damage occurring in southern Arizona due to human smuggling is a national disgrace.

The lack of a secure border with Mexico also poses a national security threat to the United States as it provides terrorists the opportunity to enter our country undetected. While the bulk of illegal immigrants being smuggled into the United States are from Mexico and Central and Latin American countries, others are from special interest countries. In a post 9-11 world, it is unconscionable that the federal government has not

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secured the international border with Mexico and we face the possibility that terrorists looking to harm America could sneak into the U.S. through the Arizona desert.

The federal government has failed to secure our international border with Mexico for decades. This neglect has fostered an environment that has led to the initial establishment and continued growth of human smuggling rings. These smuggling rings import illegal aliens to the United States, the smuggling rings themselves and an element of their human cargo bring crime and violence to our communities and neighborhoods and create a financial burden on governments and taxpayers. If that were not enough, the unsecure border in Arizona leaves a gaping hole for terrorists to enter the United States undetected and do us harm. It is time for the federal government to do its job, secure the international border with Mexico and put human smugglers out of business.